also organised on the farmers' fields to disseminate the improved production and projection technologies.

The production of oilseeds has increased from 10.83 million tonnes in 1985-86 to 22.02 million tonnes in 1997-98. Concerted efforts are being made to achieve self-sufficiency in oilseeds production by taking up oilseeds production programme more vigorously.

Production of Cashew

937. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that cashew production is only 50% of the nation's demand;

(b) if so, what are the steps taken to improve the production of cashew; and

(c) whether Government have made any proposal to the State to include the cashew cultivation in the plantations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The present production of Cashew in the country is about 50% of the demand of the industry. For increasing production and productivity of cashewnut in the country, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Integrated Development of Cashew is being implemented with an outlay of Rs. 20.00 crores for the year, 1998-99. Under the Scheme, assistance is being provided for new planting, replanting, adoption of improved production technology, intensive pest control measures, setting up of regional nurseries for production of quality planting material and training of farmers.

(c) The Ministry of Commerce had requested State Governments in May, 1993 to consider allotment of wastelands to cashew processors-exporters on a long term lease basis.

Research by Central Tuber Crop Research Institute on Plastic

938. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether as per the research of Central Tuber Crop Research Institute, plastic can be bio-degradable; if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether patenting of the above research has been sought from Central Research Institute; if so, whether the permission has been granted; and

(c) whether the commercial production in the field has since begun; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Yes, Sir. Synthetic polymers filled, grafted or blended with starch, either in its native form or modified, possess the potential to impart biodegradability to the fabricated plastics goods. A process has been developed to blend up to 40% starch with polyethylene to get injection moulding and fild grade thermoplastics.

(b) The application pertaining to composition and process for production of starch based biodegradable plastics has been filed through National Research Development Corporation, New Delhi with Controller of patents, the Patent Office, New Delhi.

(c) No. Sir.

प्राकृतिक आपदाओं के कारण फसलों को होने वाली क्षति

939. श्रीमती सरोज दुबे: क्या प्रधान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार को ज्ञात है कि सारे देश में प्राकृतिक आपदाओं के कारण किसानों की काफी फसल प्रतिवर्ष चौपट हो जाती है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो क्या सरकार किसानों के कल्याणार्थ "फसल बीमा योजना" लागू करने जा रही है;

(ग) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है; और

(घ) यदि नहीं, तो उसके क्या कारण हैं?

कृषि मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री सोम पाल): (क) जी, हां।

(ख) से (घ) देश में 1 अप्रैल 1985 से व्यापक फसल बीमा योजना पहले ही कार्यान्वयनाधीन है। योजना का मुख्य उद्देश्य किसानों को प्राकृतिक आपदा के कारण फसल के अभाव में उन्हें जो हानि होती है, उससे किसानों को बचाना और आगामी मौसम के लिए उनकी ऋण पात्रता को बनाए रखना है। यह योजना उन सभी किसानों को शामिल करती है जो गेहूं, धान, कदन्न (मक्का सहित), तिलहन एवं दलहन उगाने के लिए ग्रामीण वित्तीय संस्थाओं से फल ऋण का लाभ उठाते है।

विद्यमान व्यापक फसल बीमा योजना में किसानों व फसलों की कवरेज को बढ़ाने की दृष्टि से, सरकार ने खरीफ, 1999 मौसम से संशोधित व्यापक फसल बीमा योजना शुरू करने का निर्णय लिया है।

Production of Foodgrains

940. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news-item published in the Hindustan Times dated the 16th February, 1999 captioned "IPRI lands India's higher food yield";

(b) if so, what are the details of latest report published by the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo, concerning India; and

(c) whether India can produce twice the 150 million tons of foodgrains produced in 1998, if we have the right technology from science and research and apply if properly through the right policies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) to (c) As per the news-item, the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo has commended India's achievements in achieving food self-sufficiency with adoption of high yielding seeds and extensions services. According to news-item, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) have estimated that the hungry regions of the World can produce twice the food they now produce, if they have the right technology from science, and can apply it properly through right policies.

The production of foodgrains during 1998-99 estimated at 195.25 million tonnes. It is possible to double the food production if appropriate incentives, institutions, infrastructure and innovations are made available.

Retirement age for ICAR Scientists

941. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the benefits of retirement at 62 years have been extended to ICAR scientists who are governed by UGC norms;

(b) if not, the reasons for not issuing the notification and the scientists being allowed to retire by default;

(c) the number of scientists of ICAR who have retired since Government's notification in respect of other institutions governed by UGC norms was issued;

(d) the reasons for not freezing retirement among agricultural scientists of ICAR in consonance with the defence staff pending implementation of revised age of superannuation in the defence department; and

(e) the time by when it is likely to materialise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The Scientists of ICAR are not automatically covered by UGC norms. However, on receipt of Ministry of HRD notification for revision of pay scales of teachers of Universities & Colleges including benefits of retirement at 62 years, the Council has taken up these issues with the appropri-